



## Indoor and Outdoor Workplace Heat Guidance Frequently Asked Questions

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### **Indoor Heat**

#### **Why is there new guidance?**

Cal/OSHA updated its Heat Illness Prevention in Indoor Places of Employment Standard, effective July 23rd, 2024.

#### **What is in the new guidance?**

The guidance includes procedures for the provision of water, access to cool-down areas, measuring the temperature and heat index, and acclimatization, as well as emergency response procedures during extreme heat. However, prisons, local detention facilities, and juvenile facilities are excluded.

#### **Does my department have to follow this guidance?**

Yes. All City and County of San Francisco (CCSF) locations are required to follow these state mandates. There are some regions experiencing more days of extreme heat than San Francisco. However, every location needs to be prepared.

#### **What is the temperature that activates this guidance?**

It is 82 degrees Fahrenheit (82° F) or 87° F by heat index (which includes a measurement of humidity).

#### **What is required at a worksite when it is over 82° F?**

Employers must provide fresh, pure, and suitably cool drinking water to employees free of charge. The water should be located as close as practicable to the areas where employees are working and in indoor cool-down areas. Where drinking water is not plumbed or otherwise continuously supplied, it must be provided in sufficient quantity at the beginning of the work shift to provide one quart per employee per hour for drinking for the entire shift.

Employers must maintain one or more cool-down areas at less than 82° F at all times while employees are present. The cool-down area should be at least large enough to accommodate the number of employees on recovery or rest periods and be located as close as practicable to the areas where employees are working.

Employers must allow and encourage employees to take a preventative cool-down rest in a cool-down area when employees feel the need to do so to protect themselves from overheating.

Employers must watch for symptoms of heat illness.

**What are the symptoms of heat illness and how are they treated?**

There are multiple heat-related illnesses that can be caused by exposure to extreme heat. Symptoms and treatments of heat related illnesses are included below from mild to more serious.

Heat Illnesses	Symptoms	Treatment
Heat Rash	Areas of the skin itch intensely and often feel prickly and swollen due to overheating. Sweat glands get plugged due to too much heat, humidity, and sweat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep skin clean and dry</li> <li>• Rest in a cool area</li> <li>• Drink water</li> <li>• Change clothes frequently to stay dry</li> </ul>
Heat Cramps	Painful muscle cramps, usually in the legs or near the stomach (abdomen), are caused by losing too much salt through sweating. This is a warning that more serious heat illness can develop.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take rest breaks in a cooler environment</li> <li>• Drink water</li> <li>• Remove any personal protective equipment and loosen tightfitting clothing</li> <li>• If possible, have the worker lie down</li> </ul>
Heat Exhaustion	When fluids are not replaced, excessive loss of water and salt occurs through sweating. The person may become tired, weak, and dizzy and have damp or clammy skin. This is a serious condition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the worker rest in a cool area and drink water if they are not nauseous</li> <li>• If possible, have worker lie down with knees raised</li> <li>• Loosen the worker’s clothing</li> <li>• Seek medical aid</li> <li>• Notify your supervisor</li> </ul>
Heat Stroke	This is a life-threatening condition in which the body’s core temperature rises above 105°F (41°C) and vital functions begin to break down, including the worker’s mental functions. Without immediate medical help, heat stroke may result in permanent brain damage or death.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MEDICAL EMERGENCY: Seek immediate medical help!!!</li> <li>• Remove the worker to a cool area</li> <li>• Loosen clothing; put a cool, wet cloth under the person’s armpits and on the groin; and use a fan to create air movement</li> <li>• Avoid extreme cold because the body can go into shock</li> <li>• DO NOT take the person to the hospital in a hot car! Call an ambulance</li> </ul>

**What is a cool-down rest period and how long is it?**

A cool-down period is a rest taken in a cool-down area to prevent overheating. A cool-down rest period must be five minutes or greater (not including the time needed to access the cool-down area to allow employees to cool down and prevent from overheating).

### **Do I have to bring my own water to work?**

No. Departments are required by California law to provide fresh and pure drinking water to their employees during working hours, and access to the drinking water must be permitted at reasonable and convenient times and places. That said, you are welcome to bring your own water.

### **How much water should I drink when working in the heat?**

When working in the heat, drink one cup (eight ounces) of water every 15-20 minutes. This translates to  $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 quart (24-32 ounces) per hour. Drinking at shorter intervals is more effective than drinking large amounts infrequently. Even when water is provided, employers should remind and encourage employees to stay hydrated by drinking water.

### **Is it possible to drink too much water?**

Yes. Do not drink more than 48 oz (1½ quarts) per hour. Drinking too much water or other fluids (sports drinks, energy drinks, etc.) can cause a medical emergency because the concentration of salt in the blood becomes too low.

### **Should I only worry about hydration during work hours?**

No. It is important to hydrate both before and after work, especially during extreme heat. In addition to hydrating during work hours, being hydrated when you start work makes it easier to stay hydrated throughout the day. If you are dehydrated when you start work, you may not be able to drink enough to catch up with your body's need for water. Hydrating after work is even more important if you work in the heat on a regular basis. Chronic dehydration increases the risk for a number of medical conditions, such as kidney stones.

### **If my house has air-conditioning, can I work remotely?**

Permission to work remotely is approved at the department level. Speak with your supervisor to determine if you are eligible for remote work.

### **How do I know it is hot?**

Departments will know when we are in a heat wave and will be prepared for such temperature extremes. Supervisors or managers at work sites are responsible for measuring temperature and ensuring access to water and cool-down areas.

### **What is "acclimatization"?**

"Acclimatization" means temporary adaptation of the body to work in the heat that occurs gradually when a person is exposed to it. Acclimatization peaks in most people within four to fourteen days of regular work for at least two hours per day in the heat.

### **What if I am new to a job?**

Employees who are new to an environment may undergo acclimatization as the body adjusts to their new work environment. Acclimatization happens overtime. Thus, employees new to a work environment should be observed cautiously for the first 14 days to ensure they can safely work in a high-heat setting.

Your department's supervisor or manager can give you further guidance based on the City's heat illness prevention policy.

### **What can my department do in high-heat settings?**

Departments may support administrative controls, including:

- Modifying work schedules such as allowing changing times of shifts to avoid the high heat
- Pairing up outdoor workers to help monitor each other
- Mandating rest periods
- Rotating job functions
- Reducing work intensity or speed
- Supporting telework options

In addition to isolating sources of heat from workers or keeping employees away from heat sources, other engineering controls can be used, including increasing ventilation, placing cooling or cooling mist fans, turning on air conditioning, turning on evaporative (swamp) coolers, and increasing natural ventilation (opening windows and doors).

## **Outdoor Heat**

### **How is the outdoor guidance different from the indoor heat guidance?**

The guidance is virtually identical other than the requirement to make shade structures available once the outdoor temperature is greater than 80° F and the implementation of high-heat procedures when the outdoor temperature is greater than 95° F.

### **What if the temperatures climb higher?**

If outdoor temperatures reach 95° F, then high-heat procedures must be implemented. High-heat procedures include communication with employees, observing employees for signs of heat illness, reminding employees to drink water and to take cool down rest periods.

### **Are there conditions that contribute to the chance of heat illness?**

Environmental conditions can increase the risk of heat illness. Besides temperature and humidity, environmental factors that can increase heat illness include radiant heat from the sun or the ground, air movement, workload severity or duration, clothing that restricts heat removal, and protective clothing or personal protective equipment (PPE).